

<b>WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES</b>	<b>CHAPTER:</b> Placement and Permanency <b>POLICY:</b> Relative/Kinship Placement <b>POLICY NUMBER:</b> 5.2.4
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> September 1, 2010	<b>Current:</b> 9/1/10 <b>Revised:</b> 9/1/10 <b>Original:</b> 6/15/04

**A. PURPOSE**

Child(ren)/youth are more likely to be successful and stable in his/her foster care placements and have better outcomes if he/she is placed with relative(s)/kin.

**B. PROCEDURE**

1. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall locate relative/kinship placement options when child(ren)/youth is placed in DFS custody or when placement appears likely following procedures in **Diligent Search for Relatives/Kinship Care Policy 5.7**. Additionally:
  - a. Ask parent(s) (the *Important People in the Child(ren)'s Life* (F-SS65) is a resource that can be used to help facilitate the discussion):
    - 1) Who the child(ren)/youth is most connected to and where he/she would like the child(ren)/youth to live;
    - 2) Who he/she would trust to care for his/her child(ren)/youth if something happened to him/her; and
    - 3) If there is any relative(s)/kin he/she has concerns about placing the child(ren)/youth with (and why).
  - b. Ask child(ren)/youth (the *People Remembered Chart* (F-SS65b) can be used to assist in identifying all individuals the child(ren)/youth may have a connection with):
    - 1) Who he/she feels safe with and where he/she would like to live; and
    - 2) If there is any relative(s)/kin he/she does not want to live with (and why).
2. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall assess relative(s)/kin placement options suggested by parent(s), child(ren)/youth (if applicable) and/or known to DFS. Assessment does not guarantee the child(ren)/youth will be placed in the relative(s)/kin's home. The **Emergency Placement in a Non-Certified Home Policy 5.2.2** contains the minimum requirements which must be met if a child(ren)/youth is in DFS custody and placed with a relative(s)/kin. Additionally, the DFS caseworker/probation officer shall:
  - a. Advise the relative(s)/kin that the child(ren)/youth's placement with him/her is on a temporary basis and does not necessarily mean the child(ren)/youth will remain with him/her on a longer term or permanent basis.
  - b. Review the *Relative/Kinship Placement Agreement* (F-SS50) with the relative(s)/kin and have all parties' sign, preferably prior to placement, but no later than seven (7) days from date of placement.

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- c. Not exclude a relative(s)/kin from being assessed or considered as a placement option because of relative(s)/kin income, amount of prior contact of relative(s)/kin with the child(ren)/youth or geographic location.
- d. Explore the following factors in determining suitability of a relative(s)/kin home (factors include, but are not limited to):
  - 1) Relationship between the child(ren)/youth and relative(s)/kin;
  - 2) Ability and desire of the relative(s)/kin to protect the child(ren)/youth (assure there is no pressure for the child(ren)/youth to recant allegations of abuse/neglect);
  - 3) Safe and nurturing home environment;
  - 4) Presence of substance abuse and/or domestic violence;
  - 5) Willingness and ability of the relative(s)/kin to accept the child(re)/youth;
  - 6) Ability of the relative(s)/kin to meet the child(ren)/youth's developmental needs;
  - 7) Relationship between parent(s) and relative(s)/kin;
  - 8) Family dynamics in the relative(s)/kin home related to abuse/neglect of the child(ren)/youth;
  - 9) Willingness and ability of the relative(s)/kin to cooperate with DFS, courts multidisciplinary team (MDT) members and other agencies, individuals and/or organizations who are working with the child(ren)/youth and/or his/her family;
  - 10) Existing support systems and any additional assistance the relative(s)/kin may need to provide a safe, nurturing home for the child(ren)/youth;
  - 11) Other child(ren)/youth in the home and impact of placement; and
  - 12) Health status of relative(s)/kins and provisions to meet child(ren)/youth's long term needs.
3. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall attempt to utilize a family partnership meeting or MDT including the child(ren)/youth (as appropriate), parents, family members and community supports identified by the family to make recommendations regarding the best on-going placement option(s) for the child(ren)/youth when he/she cannot return home. Placement decisions developed through the family partnership meeting shall be shared with the MDT and the Court.
4. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall obtain the information needed and initiate an Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) referral for an assessment of the

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relative(s)/ kin's home within 30 days of the relative(s)/ kin's request if a relative(s)/kin lives out of state and indicates a desire to be a placement resource. **(Refer to ICPC Policy 5.18).**

5. If more than one relative(s)/kin requests consideration for temporary or permanent placement of the child(ren) and the relative(s)/kin cannot reach a consensus on the best placement, the DFS caseworker/probation officer shall conduct an assessment of each potential relative(s)/kin's ability to meet the child(ren)/youth's developmental, educational, mental health, emotional, social, health/medical, supervision and safety needs and prepare written reports. The *Family and Home Assessment* (F-SS35) may be used as a guide in preparing the reports.
6. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall assess the following factors when there is more than one (1) suitable placement resource, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Existing relationship with the child(ren)/youth;
  - b. Child(ren)/youth's preference;
  - c. Parent(s)'s preference;
  - d. Willingness to take all of the siblings;
  - e. Proximity to parent(s) and current school(s);
  - f. Willingness to work with the parent(s) and supervise visitation;
  - g. Ability to meet the child(ren)/youth's immediate and long term needs; and/or
  - h. Ability to contribute to the achievement of the child(ren)/youth's permanency plan.
7. If an adult household member appears on any of the Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry check(s) and/or any criminal history meets criteria outlined in **Background Check Policy 5.8.B.5 thru 5.8.B.6**, the household may not be certified as a foster home and the relative(s)/kin may not receive foster care maintenance payments as long as the adult household member(s) remains on the central registry and lives in the home.

In limited circumstances, the relative(s)/kin household may still be used as a placement resource if it is in the child(ren)/youth's best interest and if approved in writing by the District/Region Manager, or his/her designee, or ordered by the Judge. If the family does not qualify for a foster care maintenance payment, the relative(s)/kin may apply for assistance through the POWER/TANF program if the child(ren)/youth is placed with him/her and the relative(s)/kin may still receive other purchased services through DFS, as addressed in the Family Service Plan, to assist in maintaining the child(ren)/youth in the home. **(Refer to Wyo. Stat. 14-3-208(a)(iii)).**

8. If the decision is made not to place a child(ren)/youth with relative(s)/kin, the DFS caseworker/probation officer:

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- a. Shall inform the relative(s)/kin of the decision;
  - b. Shall include relative(s)/kin in the case plan and permanency planning as appropriate;
  - c. May facilitate ongoing contact with the relative(s)/kin if it is in the child(ren)/youth's best interest. Examples of contact may include, but are not limited to, phone calls, e-mail, exchanging letters, contributions to the child's Life Book, respite care and visits. Refer to **Preserving Connections Policy 5.2.6** for more examples to assist in maintaining family connections.
9. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall continuously look for appropriate relative(s)/kin placements over the life of the case. If a placement change becomes necessary, relative(s)/kin shall be re-explored as possible placement resources.
10. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall inform the relative(s)/kin of the availability of support services, training and financial resources to support the placement when placing a child with a relative(s)/kin. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall determine the types of services needed to support the relative(s)/kin's efforts to protect and care for the child(ren)/youth, and explore support the relative(s)/kin has available through other family members as well as the community and how he/she will use identified family and community supports to meet the needs of the child(ren)/youth. The relative(s)/kin's needs and services shall be addressed in the Family Service Plan.
- a. Medical
    - 1) The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall apply for medical assistance by completing the *Placement Application* (F-SS501a) and submit required documentation to the benefit specialist as soon as a child(ren)/youth is placed in DFS custody.
    - 2) The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall work with the benefit specialist to assure the child(ren)/youth remains eligible for medical assistance while he/she is in DFS custody.
  - b. Financial resources
    - 1) POWER/TANF relative payment. The DFS caseworker/probation officer may refer the relative to meet with a benefit specialist to apply.
    - 2) Child support.
    - 3) Other cash assistance programs. The child(ren)/youth may qualify, depending on individual circumstances for the following, including, but not limited to: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability or Veteran's Assistance (based on parent's disability), Social Security Survivor's Benefits (if parent is deceased). If the relative/kin decides to receive a foster care maintenance payment, these benefits will be re-directed to the State.

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- 4) Other family members.
- 5) Foster care maintenance payment. The relative/kin is required to complete the foster care certification requirements. **(Refer to the Family Foster Care Policy 5.12).**
- c. Other resources and services may be available in the community through either DFS or other providers and may include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) School lunch program;
  - 2) Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
  - 3) Child care;
  - 4) Food stamps;
  - 5) Shelter costs and/or housing;
  - 6) Tutoring;
  - 7) Education;
  - 8) Clothing;
  - 9) Transportation;
  - 10) Support group;
  - 11) Counseling;
  - 12) Respite;
  - 13) Advocacy at meetings for the child(ren)/youth (school, health related, MDT);
  - 14) Approaches to discipline, limit setting, and behaviors;
  - 15) Handling changes in child(ren)/youth's behavior due to changes in roles and relationships;
  - 16) Identifying ways handle own feelings due to changes in roles and potential losses;
  - 17) Assistance in supervising visits, if applicable;
  - 18) Assistance in developing a safety plan; and/or
  - 19) Assistance in accessing supports/services.

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- d. Training resources for relative(s)/kin include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) Traditions of Caring curriculum;
  - 2) PRIDE training;
  - 3) Local support group(s) for relative(s)/kin and/or foster parents;
  - 4) Foster care coordinators;
  - 5) Wyoming Kinship Advocacy.
11. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall assure relative(s)/kin has been notified of all proceedings regarding child(ren)/youth placed with him/her. The relative(s)/kin has the right to be heard in all juvenile court proceedings regarding the child(ren)/youth in his/her care, however, the relative(s)/kin is not a party to juvenile proceedings.
12. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall include relative(s)/kin who has a child(ren)/youth placed with his/her in Family Partnership Meetings, notify him/her of meetings so he/she can participate in the development and updates of the Family Service Plan and shall assess and provide relative(s)/kin with services to assist in meeting the child(ren)/youth's developmental, educational, mental health, emotional, social, health/medical, supervision and safety needs and in maintaining placement stability.
13. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall provide the relative(s)/kin with information regarding his/her responsibilities and determine whether or not they will need any assistance in carrying out his/her responsibilities. Relative(s)/kin, whether or not he/she is certified as a foster home, have the same responsibilities as foster parents as described in **Foster Parent Responsibilities Policy 5.12.5**.
14. The DFS caseworker/probation officer shall meet with the relative(s)/kin on a monthly basis, or more as needed, and continually assess support needs to assure a safe, stable placement.
15. A variety of tools are available to help in making an assessment of a relative/kinship home.
  - a. The Casey Foster Family Assessment and related tools can be helpful in identifying relative(s)/kin strengths and needs and can be found at [www.fosterfamilyassessments.org](http://www.fosterfamilyassessments.org). Relative(s)/kin can take the assessment on-line or use a pencil and paper version. Foster care coordinators can assist in providing training and/or assist the caseworker/probation officer in doing the assessment.
  - b. The *Relative/Kinship Home Study* (F-SS35b) may be used as the written home study or the *Family and Home Assessment Guide* (F-SS35) may be used as a guide in doing an assessment and/or completing the *Family and Home Assessment/Home Study Report* (F-SS35a) or other written reports.